Dan Smoot Report

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DAN SMOOT

VICTIMS FOREVER

On March 27, 1878, U. S. Senator Benjamin Harvey Hill (from Georgia) spoke in the Senate, saying:

"I have said I do not dread industrial corporations as instruments of power to destroy this country, because there are a thousand agencies which can regulate, restrain, and control them; but there is a corporation we may all well dread. That corporation is the federal government.

"From the aggressions of this corporation, there can be no safety if it is allowed to go beyond the well-defined limits of its power.

"I dread nothing so much as the exercise of ungranted and doubtful powers by this government. It is, in my opinion, the danger of dangers to the future of this country.

"Let us be sure to keep it always within its limits. If this great, ambitious, ever-growing corporation becomes oppressive, who shall check it? If it become wayward, who shall control it? If it become unjust, who shall trust it?

"As sentinels on the country's watchtower, Senators, I beseech you, watch and guard with sleepless dread, that corporation which can make all property and rights, all states and people, and all liberty and hope its playthings in an hour, and its victims forever."(1)

When those noble words were spoken, the country was just emerging from a dreadful 16-year period (four years of Civil War and 12 years of Reconstruction) when the Constitution of the United States had been treated like a meaningless scrap of paper — first by Lincoln, for the purpose of saving the Union; then by radical Republicans in Congress, for the purpose of eliminating all opposition to their political control of the nation. People were ready to listen to appeals for restoration of limited, legal constitutional government:

The primary threat to the life, liberty, and property of man is the government under which he lives; any government which is allowed to exercise unlimited power for the purpose of "helping" the people will eventually enslave them.

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For a brief while, the people took heed. But the seeds had been sown, the precedents set: in a "crisis" or "emergency," the federal government could do anything officialdom pleased; and the people would applaud, because, after all, the government was "giving" them something, or "saving" them from something or other.

Soon, the lessons of history were forgotten; and the warnings of men like Senator Hill echoed hollowly through the corridors of time. Once again, the people had become heedless.

And so it came about that — 81 years after Georgia's Senator Hill said the "exercise of ungranted and doubtful powers by this government" is "the danger of dangers to the future of this country" — another Georgia Senator sounded the tocsin.

In September, 1959, U. S. Senator Richard B. Russell (Georgia Democrat) told the country he was "appalled" by the fact that the national debt had risen from $16 billion to nearly $285 billion since 1930, causing inflation which endangered the stability of the dollar. Senator Russell said:

"Congress must muster the courage to stand up against pressure groups. It will require restraint on the part of all those congressmen who have pet projects. Everyone is in favor of cutting down the other fellow's program but not his own. . . .

"The trend toward concentrating power in the Federal Government ultimately will reduce the states to geographic entities devoid of rights or powers. Our system of government . . . which is one of the miracles of history, will be a thing of the past. . . .

"We must not lose sight of the fact that the states created the Federal Government, reserving to themselves all powers not spelled out in the Constitution."[2]

But the people did not listen to Senator Russell. Indeed, the Senator himself did not listen carefully. Though he is one of the most admirable men in government and is one of the four most conservative U.S. Senators (55% conservative rating in *The Dan Smoot Report* Record of The 90th Congress), Senator Russell has consistently supported such multi-billion-dollar federal programs as aid to farmers, aid for cities, aid for the redevelopment of whole regions, welfare aid to entire classes and groups of citizens, social security for everybody. There are no "powers . . . spelled out in the Constitution" for the federal government to operate such programs.

And so it came about that — nine years after Georgia's Senator Russell said our "system of government" will be "a thing of the past" unless the "trend toward concentrating power in the federal government" is halted — the national debt (which had appalled the Senator when it stood at $285 billion in 1959) had risen to $385 billion.

The catastrophic rise which added $100 billion to the national debt in nine years began with President Kennedy's New Frontier, and escalated sharply under President Johnson's Great Society.

Expenditures of the federal government for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1961, totaled $121 billion ($98 billion budgeted expenditures; $23 billion unbudgeted, or "cash" expenditures from the trust funds for social security, federal highways, and so on).

Federal expenditures planned by President Johnson in his last budget (for fiscal year ending June 30, 1970) totaled about $245 billion (about $195 billion budgeted; about $50 billion unbudgeted).

Most of the 102% increase in federal spending in nine years was for illegal (and ineffective) great-society domestic programs: welfare, aid to education, aid to cities, aid to states, aid to entire regions, a bewildering complex of programs spawned by Johnson's "war on poverty."

By 1968, government-caused inflation (which had troubled Senator Russell in 1959 as a threat to the stability of the dollar) had spiraled until it was virtually out of control. Inflation had so unstabi-

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lized the dollar that the U.S.— though renowned as the richest nation of all time — was facing the worst monetary crisis in its history.

And what had inflation done to the people whom government was ostensibly helping with the wild spending that caused the inflation?

On August 2, 1968, U. S. Representative Marvin L. Esch (Michigan Republican) stood up in the House and viewed with alarm "the high cost of government" and the "extensive waste of government funds." Mr. Esch said:

"The dollar is unstable. Inflation is robbing the pockets of our citizens. Our gold reserves are being depleted in international trade because of excessive government expenditures overseas. Interest rates are higher today than they have been since the Civil War. . . .

"What the average housewife paid $10.89 for in January, 1965, she now has to pay $11.99 for.

"Inflation has added over $100 billion to the cost of living of our people since 1960. Inflation has shrunk the value of checking accounts of our people by $10 billion in that same period. Inflation has robbed our people of $3 billion from their savings and has reduced the value of pension fund reserves by over $17 billion in the past seven years. Inflation has eroded away $15 billion from the value of U.S. government and other bonds, and has eaten $13 billion from life insurance reserves.

"In short, the cost of inflation has totaled over $188 billion since 1960 — a cost of nearly $1000 per every man, woman, and child.

"This inflation has come at the expense of those in our society who can least afford to bear the cost — the old, the handicapped, the very poor. Indeed, all of the programs to help the poor which have been conceived and run by the Government in recent years have added far less to their welfare than our inflationary government spending policies and rising costs have taken away."[3]

But Mr. Esch himself supports practically all "inflationary government spending policies." On 48 key roll-call votes in the 90th Congress (1967 and 1968), Esch cast seven conservative votes and 39 liberal votes, and twice refrained from taking a stand. This gave him a 15% conservative rating — which means 85% of his votes were cast for unconstitutional spending that causes the inflation he deplores.

Mr. Esch says:

"I have consistently voted to cut back in areas of nonessential spending. At the same time, it would be irresponsible to cut back on those important national programs in the field of education, job training, housing, water pollution control, and so forth."[3]

In his speech, Mr. Esch never mentions the Constitution and its limitations upon federal powers. He does not suggest eliminating any federal program because it is unconstitutional, though about 75% of all federal programs are unconstitutional. Esch merely wants to "cut back" on programs *he* considers nonessential, while continuing multi-billion-dollar programs *he* considers important.

Other Congressmen have different priorities. What Esch considers important, others consider nonessential; and what he considers nonessential, others consider important.

Consequently, no significant "cut backs" will ever be made, no matter how many grim warning-speeches Congressmen like Esch make, because Congress is composed largely of men like Esch — each one willing to make cuts, *except* in the programs *he* considers important.

In a column expressing dismay that the U.S. government is repeating the errors of the socialist government of Britain, Anthony LeJeune says:

"How . . . absurd and lamentable it will be if the architects of America's economic policy fail to learn from Britain's mistakes. . . .

"No measure for checking inflation will succeed unless the blackmailing power of the big

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labor unions, which enables them to secure wage increases far outstripping productivity, can be curbed, and unless government spending is drastically cut. . . . If the unions could be curbed and government spending cut, no other measures would be necessary. . . .

"But . . . the scale of reduction needed cannot be achieved merely by eliminating waste, by saving on paper clips, or switching out the lights in the White House.

"The only way to cut government spending, and to check the kind of inflation both Britain and America are suffering, is for the government to stop doing a lot of the things it has been doing."(4)

There is less excuse for the U.S. government spending us into bankruptcy than for the British government plundering Great Britain, because we have different systems.

A British Member of Parliament is, at least, acting legally when he supports spending, the way Congressman Esch does, merely on the basis of his personal judgment that the spending is important. The British have no written constitution limiting the powers of Parliament. Parliament can legally do anything a majority of its members agree upon.

The U.S. government cannot *legally* do just anything the President and a majority of Congress agree upon, because the Constitution limits and specifies the powers of the federal government, prohibiting it from operating any program not authorized by the Constitution, even if every Member of Congress, the President, and every person in the country want the program.

A Member of Congress perjures himself by violating the Constitution which he is sworn to uphold, every time he votes for a federal program that is not clearly authorized by some specific grant of power in the Constitution.

We still have a few men in Congress who now and then express this basic constitutional principle, as Senator Russell did in 1959 when saying that the federal government can legally exercise only those "powers . . . spelled out in the Constitution." But not one Member of Congress consistently uses the principle as a commandment, or even a guide, in determining how he should vote.

At least $145 billion of the $245 billion dollars which the federal government spends annually is illegally spent; the $145 billion should not be taken from taxpayers; the programs for which it is being taken should be abolished (not "cut back," but eliminated), because the programs are not authorized by "powers . . . spelled out in the Constitution."

All efforts at streamlining, economizing, reorganizing and reassessment of priorities will accomplish nothing. We must have a Congress that will obey the Constitution.

Unless we get such a Congress, the federal government will continue to grow in size and power and waste and extravagance and duplication of effort, until it utterly crushes the people it is supposed to serve.

FOOTNOTES

(1) *Speeches of Benjamin Harvey Hill*, Hudgins Co., Atlanta, 1891, p. 529
(2) *Dun's Review and Modern Industry*, Sept., 1959
(3) *Congressional Record* (daily), Aug. 29, 1968, pp. E7611-12
(4) "Can't U.S. Learn From Britain's Errors?", by Anthony LeJeune, *The Dallas Morning News*, Feb. 26, 1969, p. D2

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